



Parting with the Past

All that the past year holds of wrong or right, regret or sorrow, that's in the hand of God's almighty love! But thank God, if we truly trust the Lord Jesus Christ, if we have completely yielded all into His hands, He can bring honey out of the rock and sweet waters out of the bitter desert of the past, no matter what it was. He can give you in this new year beauty for ashes and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness, joy of the morning for the woe of the night! All of this is promised in His Word, and how we delight to know that He'll do this.¹—That we are His, and trusting Him.—Virginia Brandt Berg²

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All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose.—Apostle Paul³

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Life is a tapestry: We are the warp; angels, the weft; God, the weaver. Only the Weaver sees the whole design.—Eileen Elias Freeman⁴

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Life is full of choices. Every day there are choices, large and small, and every day that passes leaves a greater legacy of past choices. Some turned out to be good, some bad, some a bit of both, and some we're not yet sure about, but each played a part in making us what we are.

Here are a few principles that I find helpful when thinking about the past and what has brought me to where I am today.

Our future isn't limited by our past. No matter what decisions we have made or what others decided for us, and no matter what point we are at now, the future is still as bright as God's promises—ones like these: "If you have faith ... nothing will be impossible for you,"⁵ and "All things are possible to him who believes."⁶ If you're not where you want to be, there is time to change that. Where there is life, there is hope.

If some choice you made seems to have had a bad outcome, or one that is not what you had in mind, remember that you probably haven't seen its full effect yet. What looks like a stone or a serpent may yet turn out to be bread—or even a three-course meal.⁷ Film director, actor, screenwriter, and producer Orson Welles once said, "A happy ending depends on where you stop your story." Or, as someone else put it, "Everything will be okay in the end; and if it's not okay, it's not the end yet." That principle is certainly true for those who love the Lord and look to Him for guidance, because He has promised to always work things out for our good in the end.⁸

It's human nature to look back and have regrets about some of the things we did, or to wish we'd done them differently. God understands that and sympathizes. But it's a mistake to overlook the good that also came from those experiences—the wisdom, maturity, and other lessons learned, which have helped to shape our character and prepare us for bigger and better things to come.

When you look back on the past, count your blessings. Remember those "true, noble, just, pure, and lovely" things that also make up the story of your life.⁹ Thank God for the good decisions you made in the past, as well as those that He's going to help you make in the future.—Maria Fontaine¹⁰

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Your past is important but it is not nearly as important to your present as the way you see your future.—
Tony Campolo

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Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.—Apostle Paul¹¹

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As the old year closes, before the new year comes in, it's good to sit down and ask yourself, "What have I accomplished this past year? I wonder if I have done my best for Jesus, when He has done so much for me." Has it truly been His year, lived for Him, by His power, His strength and His guidance, in His will, having the fruits of His Spirit and the fruits of His Word? Has it been a year that you're thankful for because you're sure the Lord is pleased with it?

It's also a good time to count your blessings. What are you most thankful for during the past year? What prayer or hope do you have for the new year? What promise from His Word do you claim for the new year?

Help us, Lord, as we start this new year, to look forward with faith. Give us strength to do what You want. Lead us and guide us and keep us in Thy will, Lord. Give us a good year, whatever comes, that it will be one that we've lived to the fullest for You!

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Life can only be understood backwards; but it must be lived forwards.—Søren Kierkegaard

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Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.—Apostle Paul¹²

1 Isaiah 61:3.

2 “Forgetting the Past,” Meditation Moments 20.

3 Romans 8:28 KJV.

4 The Angels’ Little Instruction Book (Grand Central Publishing, 1994).

5 Matthew 17:20.

6 Mark 9:23.

7 See Luke 11:11–13.

8 Romans 8:28.

9 See Philippians 4:8.

10 Activated, January 2012, Volume 13, Issue 1.

11 Philippians 3:13–14 NKJV.

12 2 Corinthians 5:17 NKJV.